Course Syllabus for ASTR 400/500: AU Seminar Series

Location: HBH 227
Time: 12:00 pm to 12:50 pm, Wednesday

Instructor: Mustafa A. Amin
Office: HBH 364
email: mustafa.a.amin@rice.edu

Office Hours/Feedback on Talks: Students who work with a faculty member should get feedback on their talks from their advisers. The instructor will be available to provide feedback to all other students and answer any questions about the seminar immediately after the talks. Questions related to scheduling can be addressed via email.

Course Description: ASTR 400 (undergraduate) and ASTR 500 (graduate) are a 1-credit seminar class that meets every week at 12:05. The course may be repeated for credit. Junior and senior astro majors and all astro graduate students should sign up for this class each semester.

Speakers include experts from around the world who come to Rice to discuss their research. Rice faculty, graduate students and undergraduates also participate by giving talks, the graduate students every semester and the undergrads every other semester. Student talks do not necessarily need to be on their own research. Full-hour talks should be 45 minutes in length, and half-hour talks 20 minutes, with 5 minutes for questions. We must vacate the room before 1 pm, so please be on time. It is up to the speakers to ensure that their talks display properly, so please check your presentation ahead of time. Abstracts should be provided to the instructor no later than Friday morning before the talk so notices can be distributed.

Prerequisites: Students taking this class should either be enrolled as a graduate student in the Department of Physics and Astronomy or closely-related field, or be a declared major for one of the undergraduate degrees in the Physics and Astronomy Department.

Grading: Pass/fail. At least 80% attendance is required to pass, and students must present a talk as described above.

Absences: If you are away for an academic reason, such as a conference, observing run, or experiment, please let me know beforehand, and that absence will not count against your attendance requirement.

Honor Code: Aside from the requirement to only sign in under your name, I can't think of any honor code issues with this class, though please see `Internet Disturbances' below.

Internet Disturbances: Please be respectful of the fact that the speaker has put in a great deal of effort on their talk, and in some cases has traveled a long way to be here. Please turn off all ringing, beeping devices and do not surf the internet, type loudly onto a keyboard, text, update Facebook, take selfies, email, Snapchat, Instagram or embrace other electronic disturbances during a talk. If you must do anything like that, take it outside. Not only is it disrespectful to the speaker, but it is also distracting to anyone sitting behind you.

Auditors: Auditing this class is rare, most students who have an interest simply sign up for it. However, if you are away for a large fraction of the semester it could make sense to audit. Please see me about your circumstances if you fall into this category.

Disability Information: Students with a documented disability that impacts their work in this class should contact me to discuss their needs. Disabled students should also register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Ley Student Center.

Outcomes/Assessments

Students completing this class should be able to do the following:

- Assess research talks and draw connections with coursework
- Become aware of ongoing astrophysical research inside and outside of the Department
- Create a scientific presentation
- Improve speaking and presentation skills
- Learn to present complex concepts in a fixed amount of time
- Learn to answer scientific questions in front of a group of faculty